

Concept Paper Format for Doctoral Dissertations and Master's Theses

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Statement of the Problem: a rational and reasoned argument that posits the "problem" as problem and indicates the necessity for the research. Critical studies (elements of the literature review) that provide supporting information for the "gap" in the current research that the student's own research will fill should be woven into this segment of the text to support the argument.

Significance of the Research: indicates the various shareholders in the research and cites the beneficiaries of the outcomes. The far reaching implications of the project findings should be included.

Research Question (s): clearly write the question (s) in a precise manner that captures the essence of the research imperative.

Literature Review: List the component areas of the studies that comprise the literature review. These are derived from key elements/terms in the Research Questions. (When developed and completed, this section will become Chapter II.)

Method: describe the method that best compliments the research questions and "fits" within that initiative. When developed completely, this will become Chapter III: use a process analysis approach to structure this piece. Include a very brief literature review centered in the methodological selection. If the research involves human subjects, animals, recombinant DNA, and certain substances or materials, etc. include information regarding the IRB protocol.*

*Research involving human beings, animals, recombinant DNA, and certain substances or materials cannot commence without approval from the IRB. If your research involves human subjects, there is required HSIRB training that must be taken. Training must also be updated. The training site may be viewed at the following URL: www.citiprogram.org. If you have questions, please contact Julia Mays, HSIRB Compliance Officer, at 387. 8293 or julia.mays@wmich.edu or Dr. Amy Naugle, HSIRB Chair, at 387. 8284/ amy.naugle@wmich.edu.

Chapter IV: Results and Analysis (Under Construction)

Chapter V: Discussion (Under Construction). Includes an overview of the most salient research findings; limitations of the study; recommendations for future study. (It is recommended that students keep track of this information as they move through the process of researching and writing so that information/ideas/insights remain "fresh" and relevant.)

Concept papers should be no longer than four to five pages in length but should represent a comprehensive document that encapsulates the research project. Conceptual conversations with the advisor/committee members are necessary to the enhancement and definition of the concept paper - the blueprint or roadmap for the monograph. Ideally, negotiations with the advisor and consensus should occur at this point, where conceptual changes are essentially "painless." Once developed, the concept paper is transformed into Chapter I (Introductory Chapter). The concept paper, as does the first chapter, should briefly refer to Chapters IV and V as elements of the dissertation/thesis that will follow.

Chapter I = Introductory Chapter

Chapter II = Literature Review

Chapter III = Method

Chapter IV = Results and Analysis

Chapter V = Discussion

Chapters I, II, and III = The Dissertation/Thesis Proposal